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EDITORIAL

Carter Makes a Fine Choice To Take Over the CIA Helm

STANSFIELD TURNER well might do for the Central Intelligence Agency what Gerald Ford did for the presidency: give it credibility again and unquestioned public confidence.

Adm. Turner seems to have the equipment to do this very thing. Although he has never held an intelligence command, he has been conditioned in a naval career at sea and on land to the use of military and political intelligence.

Jimmy Carter plucked him out of Southern Europe where he commanded Allied defense forces. A Rhodes scholar after Annapolis, he served as president of the prestigious Naval War College at Newport, R.I., and in fact made it prestigious by converting it from a rest center for weary line officers to a college with academic pretensions.

Adm. Turner appears to be a broad-gauged man on the order of Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, one of three military officers to hold the job previously and who pretty much put the CIA together originally.

That this vital agency fell apart during the Nixon administration is a story too painful to repeat here. We think that is unlikely to happen again.

Under the law the CIA is an advisory body to the National Security Council, which is made up of civilians. The U.S. Government Manual points out that it "has no police, subpoena, or law enforcement powers or internal security functions," but these stipulations have been ignored in the past to the point of clear and present danger to our form of government.

Adm. Turner doesn't think this way, or at least he doesn't write this way. By coincidence he is author of an article "The Naval Balance: Not Just a Numbers Game" in the current issue of Foreign Affairs. A clue to the man appears in a closing paragraph:

"... But, we live in an open society. The press probes. Congress investigates. Searching questions are good, if

not always comfortable, for the soul. Such dialogue works in its abrasive way. Professional opinion is pressed hard on matters of national policy; and from this interaction arises the consensus essential to the support of whatever level of naval forces is selected."

We suspect the CIA will be in good, safe, intelligent hands, where it belongs.